

May 22, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Secretary Pompeo,

We write in opposition to a proposed mining development in the Upper Skagit River Watershed in British Columbia, Canada. This proposed mine in the Skagit River headwaters could negatively impact Washington state's tourism and recreation economy, the public health of citizens, and our state's cultural and natural resources, including economically and ecologically valuable fish populations that are dependent upon the health of the transboundary watershed.

The Skagit River flows from its headwaters in British Columbia through the North Cascades National Park and Mt. Baker Snoqualmie Forest to Puget Sound. Imperial Metals Corporation has applied for a permit to conduct mineral exploration for up to five years in an area known as the "donut hole"—a vast acreage of unprotected land surrounded by the Skagit Valley Provincial Park and the E.C. Manning Provincial Park located at the headwaters of the Skagit River.

On December 14, 1984, the "Treaty Between the United States and Canada Relating to the Skagit River and Ross Lake, and the Seven Mile Reservoir on the Pend d'Oreille River" was ratified. The Treaty resolved disputes related to hydropower electric generation at the Ross Dam and included the British Columbia-Seattle Agreement, which preceded the ratification of the Treaty. A primary component of the Treaty and the Agreement is the protection of wilderness, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities in the Upper Skagit River Watershed. We believe that this proposed exploration undercuts the spirit of the Treaty and the Agreement.

Mining in the Upper Skagit River Watershed could be detrimental to the Endangered Species Act-threatened fish and other sensitive wildlife populations, such as salmon and orca. This watershed provides over 30 percent of the freshwater flowing into Puget Sound and supports a diverse fish and wildlife population that are of local, regional, and national importance, including the largest population of threatened steelhead and Chinook salmon in Puget Sound and the largest run of chum salmon in the contiguous United States.

Additionally, the proposal names copper—a metal highly toxic to the native salmon—as a targeted goal of this mining. The potential for releases of copper and other heavy metals would pollute waters downstream. This would pose a substantial human health risk to the State of Washington, City of Seattle, and the Tribes dependent upon this watershed. It also threatens Washington state's outdoor recreation economy, which generates 201,000 jobs, \$26.2 billion in consumer spending, and \$7.6 billion in wages and salaries<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/ORTF/EconomicAnalysisOutdoorRec.pdf>

We believe mineral development in the Upper Skagit River Watershed undermines the intent of the Treaty and the Agreement and places in jeopardy the cooperation we have shared with Canada on the protection of the Watershed for 35 years. For these reasons and those outlined above, we call your attention to this imperative issue.

Sincerely,

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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

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Patty Murray  
United States Senator

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Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

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Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

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Denny Heck  
Member of Congress

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Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress

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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress

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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

CC:  
Premier John Horgan of British Columbia  
Mayor Jenny Durkan  
Governor Jay Inslee